Remarks

Claims 1, 2, 4 and 6 are pending. New Claims 7 – 10 have been added. The amendment in Claim 1 is based on original Claims 1 and 3. The other amendments only relate to editorial changes. New Claims 8 and 9 are based on page 10, lines 16 – 19 of the specification. New Claims 9 and 10 are based on page 9, lines 23 – 25 of the specification. No new matter is introduced into the Claims by these amendments.

Applicants submit that this rejection is moot by amendment. Although moot, Applicants offer the following comments. Surprisingly, the drilling fluid composition of the present invention builds up a gel within the first 10 seconds after circulation of the drilling fluid compositions is slow or interrupted *(page 5, lines 23-25 of the instant specification)*. Some of the drilling fluid compositions reach even essentially the same gel strength within 10 seconds as within 10 minutes (page 13, Table 2, Products B and C).

Warren is limited to CMC's that are derivatized with a quarternary ammonium group (QN-CMC) in drilling fluids. The gel strength after 10 sec. is considerably lower than after 10 min. This means that the gel strength builds only up over time.

Boevink relates to the production of processed meat. The level of ordinary skill in the art of processed meat is the knowledge about CMC in interaction with meat, specifically how to preserve weight and consistency in meat products upon storage *(paragraph [008] of Boevink)*. Copending Application 10/537,199 (publication No. 2006/0029711, Theeuwen) relates to the use of CMC for preparing fruit-based products. A skilled artisan who needs to improve drilling fluids would not try to find a solution to his problem in the area of processed meat or fruit-based products.

The Examiner is cordially invited to call the undersigned if it will facilitate prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

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